

Washington, DC - Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) issued the following statement today in response to media reports that Senator Charles Grassley and other Republican leaders supported a 2003 Medicare bill that included optional coverage for end-of-life care consultations between patients and their doctors.

"Senator Grassley continues to repeat the ridiculous claim that paying doctors to discuss end-of-life care with their patients is somehow 'pulling the plug on grandma,' yet in 2003 he voted for a bill with a nearly identical provision allowing Medicare to reimburse doctors for end-of-life care consultations. It's doublespeak like this that makes people cynical about Washington politicians. Senator Grassley needs to stop the fear tactics and stick to the facts about healthcare reform. We need a rational discussion so we can achieve much-needed reform in this country," said Braley.

Late last night, Time reported that Senator Grassley had supported a 2003 Medicare bill including coverage for end-of-life care consultations. LINK: <http://swamp.land.blogs.time.com/2009/08/13/oh-those-death-panels/>

The 2003 Medicare Modernization Act (HR 1) passed by the Republican-controlled Congress and signed into law by President Bush allowed Medicare to fund end-of-life and advanced care planning consultations for terminally ill patients who had not yet elected hospice. Senator Grassley was a main drafter of this legislation, and supported the bill.

See for yourself: HR 1 - The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003

Visit: http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&dbname=cp108&sid=cp108d60yh∓refer=&r_n=hr391.108&item=&sel=TOC_2103579&

About halfway down the page in the link, you'll see:

Conference Agreement

The conference agreement provides coverage of certain physician's services for certain terminally ill individuals. Beneficiaries entitled to these services are those who have not elected the hospice benefit and have not previously received these physician's services. Covered services are those furnished by a physician who is the medical director or employee of a hospice program. The covered services are: evaluating the beneficiary's need for pain and symptom management, including the individual's need for hospice care; counseling the beneficiary with respect to end-of-life issues and care options, and advising the beneficiary regarding advanced care planning . Payment for such services equals the amount established for similar services under the physician fee schedule, excluding the practice expense component. The provision would apply to consultation services provided by a hospice program on or after January 1, 2005.

Senator Grassley voted for the conference report on this legislation on 11/25/2003:

http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=108&session=1&vote=00459